



Practitioner Tips

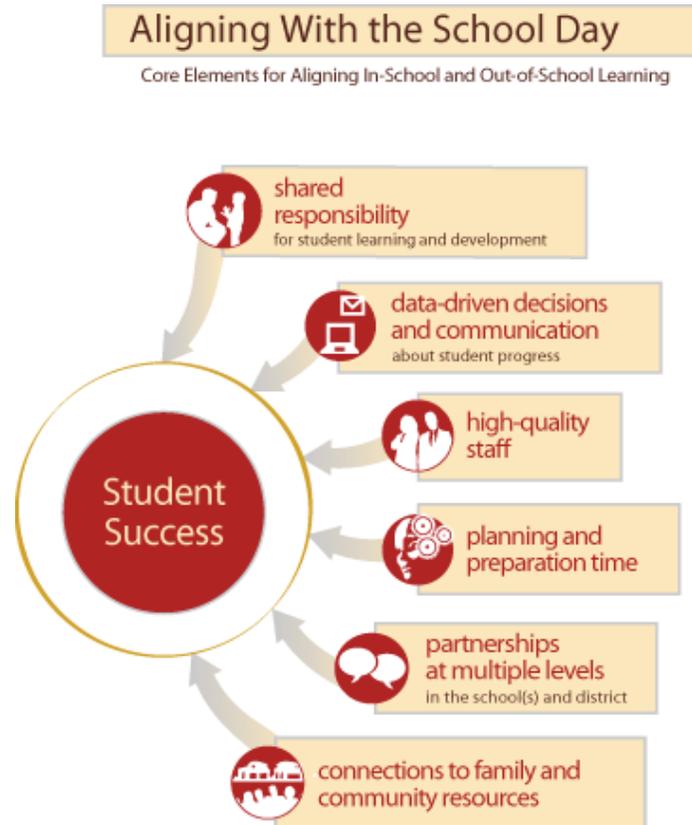
Action Tips for Alignment Around the Core Elements

The research on out-of-school learning programs suggests that six core elements are involved in aligning in-school and out-of-school learning. In practice, this kind of alignment won't look exactly the same at every 21st CCLC site. The practitioner tips below suggest what it might look like in an out-of-school program that has achieved a high level of alignment with the school(s) its students attend. Several tips are provided for each core element.

As you review the tips, you'll see comments and ideas from your peers at 21st CCLC sites across the country. You can use these tips and ideas to spark reflection and action in your own program.

Shared Responsibility for Student Learning and Development

- Partner with school staff and families to complement what happens during the school day. Interactions can range from informal conversations with families and teachers to structured meetings in which all parties, including students, contribute to designing and selecting activities that connect academic learning to everyday life.
- Include homework and tutoring in program activities, but also include active, hands-on learning that builds on students' interests and experiences and links to school-day learning. Adults can support excitement about learning and development of 21st century skills such as teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking.
- Recognize that you play an important role in students' lives; you can impact academic success and nurture students' social, emotional and academic growth. Strategies include teaching students to work effectively in large and small groups with their peers and acting as coaches and facilitators rather than managers of learning.
- Involve your program staff and your students' families in the education team. The out-of-school program brings new offerings to the school-day experience, and the school relies on the program for information and support.





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Data-Driven Decisions and Communication About Student Progress

- Take an active role in learning about your students' academic strengths and weaknesses. Use formal and informal data sources to monitor student academic progress. Formal sources include results from classroom, district and state assessments. Informal sources include conversations with students, teachers, staff and families.
- Use a variety of data to research and address student needs. This includes public data such as school report cards and confidential data such as individual student results on assessments. Partnerships with the school and district support an established, ongoing process for sharing and reviewing these data.
- Monitor students' social and emotional development. For example, observe and interact with students during program hours, talk with families and school staff, and provide for regular two-way updates that involve families, 21st CCLC staff, and the school's teachers and counselors. Apply management and discipline approaches that align with strategies selected by the school and the program.
- Collect and review attendance data to identify students who might have conflicts or difficulties with program hours or transportation. Follow up with families to resolve problems. Also use attendance data as an indicator of student interest in program activities.
- Work with your program director and evaluator to develop data collection strategies and evaluation reports. Design reports to help the program meet funding requirements and also to inform program planning and decision making.

“At a time when learning is focused on standards-based curriculum and ensuring that all students are provided with multiple approaches to learn content, the 21st CCLC program has become a way to extend the day and engage students and teachers in creative approaches.”

— 21st CCLC Teacher, Massachusetts

High-Quality Staff

- Partner with school and district administrators to identify high-quality teachers and other school staff to work in the program. Your program may provide financial support to help the school or district maintain specialists who work both in and outside of the school day.
- Participate in school meetings such as staff, school improvement and parent-teacher organization meetings. Likewise, invite school staff and families to join 21st CCLC events and to observe and contribute to program activities.
- Provide students with adult role models who come from their community and reflect their interests and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For example, search out paid and volunteer staff who reflect the diversity of students.
- Make professional development a high priority. A two-way approach ensures that 21st CCLC staff participate in appropriate school and district training events, and school and district staff have opportunities to participate in training offered by out-of-school staff and community-based partners. When appropriate, encourage family members to take part in these events.
- Offer financial and other support to help staff members find and attend professional development activities. These activities help staff members support students with special and





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language needs, provide developmental and social/emotional support to students, and use instructional approaches that support academic improvement.

Planning and Preparation Time

- Make sure the 21st CCLC program director oversees such “big picture” planning elements as curriculum and instructional approaches, and supports the site coordinator in implementing these approaches.
- Ensure that all staff have paid time to participate in professional development and get hands-on practice in using curriculum and instructional approaches.
- Schedule paid time for program staff to plan and prepare for student activities. The program director can participate in and contribute to professional development for colleagues and for students’ family members. The program director can also review student progress to provide individualized support.

Partnerships at Multiple Levels in the School(s) and District

- Establish partnerships with staff at the school(s) and district. Through regular, two-way communication and meetings, work with these partners to support student achievement by ensuring that the school and the 21st CCLC program staffs know one another’s skills and roles.
- Work with school and district staff to identify and resolve problems and celebrate student and program successes.
- Partner with the school staff to align activities so that family and community members can recognize and actively participate in learning goals that connect programs across the school and district and support the students.
- Assign one or more 21st CCLC staff members to participate in school or district staff meetings, and welcome school and district staff into meetings at the 21st CCLC program.

Connections to Family and Community Resources

- Help families build positive relationships with in-school and out-of-school educators. To underscore the importance of these relationships, designate a staff member as “family liaison” or encourage all staff members to nurture strong relationships.
- Learn about your students through conversations with family members who pick up their children at the end of the day. Staff members can ask families about students’ interests, learning styles and needs.
- Provide activities and information for families. Possibilities include literacy support and training, information about creating a home environment that supports learning, and opportunities to connect with school-day teachers and to learn how 21st CCLC activities build on what happens during the school day.





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- Honor family preferences regarding event schedules and locations to create events that meet family needs and that happen at convenient times and places.
- Work with the school, social service agencies and community-based partners to connect students and their families with local social and health service providers.
- Invite local experts, businesses and community-based organizations to participate in 21st CCLC program activities to deliver academic and enrichment activities that connect learning to real-world applications.

“Our Health and Human Services partner has parent components in its program, and I asked for their help to connect with parents. We partnered to get GED courses and technology training for parents. I was really pleased when the Parks & Recreation folks offered free child care during classes. We had a school where information was translated into five languages, so we offered English for Speakers of Other Languages for those parents. They loved it. HHS arranged for food bank involvement so parents could take food home after class, and they even received laundry supplies. Now kids go to the food bank and volunteer, partly as a way to thank 21st CCLC for supporting their families.”

—21st CCLC Program Director, Virginia

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